THE NEW
SUNDAY EXPRESS
BENGALURU • SUNDAY • MARCH 09, 2025 • ₹12.00 • PAGES 26 • LATE CITY EDITION

Women trailblazers take over PM's social media

On International Women's Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's social media handles were taken over by a group of extraordinary women who have excelled in diverse fields. Chess grandmaster R Vaishali, farmer-entrepreneur Anita Devi, nuclear scientist Elina Mishra, space scientist Shilpi Soni, accessibility advocate Anjlee Agarwal and rural entrepreneur Ajaita Shah shared their journeys, highlighting the power of India's 'Nari Shakti' | P9

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A vehicle set on fire by protesters in Kangpokpi district on Saturday | PTI

MANIPUR ERUPTS AMID BID TO RESTORE FREE MOVEMENT

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @Guwahati

CLASHES broke out in Manipur's Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district on Saturday as the Centre tried to restore free movement for people on all roads in the ethnic violence-hit state. Over a dozen protesters were injured, one of whom reportedly succumbed to injuries. The protesters attacked a state-run bus and torched at least one private vehicle.

At a high-level Manipur security review meeting held in New Delhi on March 1, Union home minister Amit Shah had issued directions to restore free movement and take action against anyone attempting to create obstructions.

Acting on that directive, the Manipur State Transport (MST) operated two buses, one on the Imphal-Kangpokpi-Senapati route and another on the Imphal-Bishnupur-Churachandpur route, with security cover by personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces.

Similarly, the Federations of Civil Society (FOCS), a conglomerate of 20 Imphal Valley-based organisations, took out a peace expedition from Imphal to go to Senapati which is a Naga-majority district. The participants, who were travelling in some vehicles, were stopped at Sekmai in the Imphal West district by security forces and they returned to Imphal.

Meanwhile, crowds were building in different parts of Kangpokpi district to thwart the march by FOCS and the movement of the MST bus. They erected barricades on a highway by putting boulders and burning tyres.

When the MST bus entered Kangpokpi district, the protesters attempted to prevent its movement by pelting stones. This led to a confrontation and the security personnel used force to restore normalcy leading to clashes. The other MST bus travelled up to Kangvai, a small town in Kuki-majority Churachandpur district bordering Meitei-majority Bishnupur district, and returned.

Dealing with US push in agri market

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

AS India and the US begin trade talks, New Delhi has conveyed that it has been reducing applied tariffs in agreements with developed countries, while emphasising a "mutually beneficial" approach and "sensitive handling of sectors like agriculture", a key focus of the Trump administration in seeking greater market access.

A team of Indian officials, led by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal visited Washington from March 3 to 6 and engaged the US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and their teams. President Donald Trump said India has agreed to cut its tariffs "way down now" because somebody is finally "exposing" them, evoking sharp reactions from opposition parties in the country.

Reducing "average applied tariff significantly" has been a key aspect of India's recently concluded mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreements with a slew of developed countries such as Australia, the UAE, Switzerland, Norway and the ongoing talks with the European Union and United Kingdom. But the "tone and substance of the talks" and "understanding each others' concerns to get to an agreement" is the new focus. "The teams will now get into sector wise, issue-wise specifics," said a source.

Asked about various statements coming out of Washington on tariffs and trade negotiations, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a press briefing: "We have in recent times entered into bilateral trade agreements based on tariff liberalisation with several partners.... The ongoing discussions should be seen in that context." Trump's tariff against India rolls out April 2.

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RAHUL
'CONG MOLES AIDING BJP'
Warning leaders in Gujarat, the MP said the Congress is prepared to sack up to 40 members if needed to cleanse the party in the BJP-dominated state | P10

Koppal rape: 2 held, tourist's body found

AMIT S UPADHYE @ Koppal

THE body of Odisha tourist **Bibash**, 22, who was pushed into the Tungabhadra canal along with two others at Sanapur village in Koppal district on Thursday night, was found on Saturday near the power grid house.

Koppal police have arrested two of the three accused of assaulting and raping two women, including a foreign national. They have also been charged with murdering Bibash.

Four tourists, including two foreigners, and a homestay owner were attacked by the accused near the canal at Sanapur on Thursday night.

SP Ram Arasiddi said the arrested have been identified as Mallesha alias Handi Mallesha, 22, a mason from Sai Nagar, Gangavati, and Chetan Sai, 21, a labourer. Efforts are on to nab the third accused.

He said the accused used to go on long rides at night after consuming alcohol. After seeing the tourists on Thursday night, they stopped their bikes and demanded money. This led to an argument and the accused attacked the group. They pushed the men into the canal and allegedly raped the two women. Mallesha and Sai confessed to the crime, he said.

HEINOUS CRIME, SAYS CM: P5

EXPRESS READ

Woman held for killing baby over blind belief

Koppal: A woman has been arrested over the death of her baby in Koppal after she burned it with incense sticks in the blind belief that it will cure it of sickness | P5

Unbeaten India's one final push for desert glory

GOMESH S @Chennai

IN sports, more often than not, history is written by winners. No matter what a team does or how far a team progresses in a tournament, holding aloft the trophy defines it. No other team knows this better than India. In the last three ICC white ball tournaments, India have reached the final three times, lost one and won one. How the third final against New Zealand in the ICC Champions Trophy would end will be known on Sunday night. The win will also lay to rest the controversies surrounding the scheduling.

One thing, however, is clear that the brand of cricket India are playing is something unique. One that head coach Gautam Gambhir spoke about from the moment he took over: winning brand of cricket, a philosophy they would want to follow. India, however, have not been able to live up to it. Home series loss after 12 years, Border-Gavaskar Trophy loss after ten years have added pressure. A victory in Dubai is ever more important. The opponents on Sunday are New Zealand, the team India had beaten in the Group stages. The Black Caps have troubled India before and going by the records India should not slumber into complacency. P13

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Tax Payable after March 31st
• Property Tax of 2023-24 : Rs.25,000/-
• Interest : Rs.6,000/-
• Penalty : Rs.18,500/-
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